

FORM 104 51-4AA  
FEB 1952

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

CLASSIFICATION

CONFIDENTIAL  
SECURITY INFORMATION

25X1A

## INFORMATION REPORT

REPORT NO. [REDACTED]

CD NO.

COUNTRY North Korea

DATE DISTR. 13 April 1952

SUBJECT Food in North Korea: quantity, prices, controls

NO. OF PAGES 6

DATE OF INFO.

25X1C

NO. OF ENCLS.  
(LISTED BELOW)

PLACE ACQUIRED

SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

25X1X

National Food Administration Bureau

1. The National Food Administration Bureau is an important central administrative organ of the North Korean government and enjoys a status equal to that of the ministries in the North Korean cabinet, and the chief of the bureau is of cabinet minister rank. The bureau consists of the following eight departments, one section, and one office:
  - a. Departments:
 

|            |                |
|------------|----------------|
| Inspection | Transportation |
| Accounting | Taxes-in-kind  |
| Planning   | Food Rationing |
| Storage    | Meat           |
  - b. Grain Refining Office
  - c. Special Supply Section
2. Each of the above units has a chief and from two to eight assistants. The chief of the bureau is KWON Yong-t'ae, a North Korean Labor Party member from North Hamgyong Province. He is assisted by one deputy chief. Since the outbreak of

CLASSIFICATION

CONFIDENTIAL

|       |   |      |   |      |  |              |             |             |           |         |  |
|-------|---|------|---|------|--|--------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|---------|--|
| STATE | X | NAVY | X | NSRB |  | DISTRIBUTION | CINCPAC#    | FEAF#       | COMNAVFE# | COMFLT# |  |
| ARMY  | X | AIR  | X | FBI  |  | COMFLT#      | CINCPACFLT# | COMNAVPHIL# |           |         |  |

CONFIDENTIAL

-2-

the war the office has been in a school building for the Blind, Deaf, and Mute at Taet'aryong-sam-ri (125-43, 39-01) (YD-3524), P'yongyang.

#### P'yongyang City Food Administration Bureau

3. The P'yongyang City People's Committee Food Administration Bureau is under the direction of the chief of the National Food Administration Bureau in matters of food administration. In routine office matters the department is under the direction of the chairman of the City People's Committee. The Chief of the department is KIM Man-pok (金萬福), age 31, a native of North Hamgyong Province, and a NKLP member. The deputy chief is KIM Hyon-sik (金喜植), age 27, a native of North P'yongang Province, and a NKLP member. The department consists of nine sections for accounting, statistics, storage, transportation, taxes-in-kind, distribution, meat, refining, and inspection. Each of these sections has a chief and from one to seven other employees.
4. The P'yongyang City Food Administration Department operates six warehouse centers, which includes 25 warehouses and three polishing mills. In these warehouses, in late 1951, were stored 405,000 sacks, each containing 120 pounds of grain. Of this number 225,000 sacks were stored in warehouse center Number 1, at Sonkyo-ri, P'yongyang, and 15 of the 25 warehouses were located in this center. The three mills were polishing 1,500 tons of rice per month and 1,950 tons of other grains.
5. There were 30 food ration stations in P'yongyang in late 1951 and 124,000 owners of ration cards.<sup>1</sup> The ration stations employed 127 men, and the station warehouses had a capacity of 17,700 sacks of grain and rice.

#### Rationing in P'yongyang City

6. On 1 November 1951 the ration stations in P'yongyang were directed by the P'yongyang Commercial Control Office. Regulations established by this office specified that ration cards be issued to recipients of rations through the food ration officer at their place of employment. The cards bear the names of a chief at the recipient's working place and the chief of the City Food Administration Department. Recipients receive rations twice a month at a ration station in the neighborhood where they live.
7. When a ration station requests grain, the City Food Administration Department issues food delivery orders to a warehouse and simultaneously orders the Land Transportation Office to transport the grain to the station.
8. Rations are determined by the recipient's classification and number of family members. Upon receiving rations, a ticket, showing the amount received, is taken at the station. If a recipient is sick or for other reasons absent, rations for the absentee are deducted. A daily report showing the sales and amount of grain yet in the station is prepared and submitted with a bank deposit receipt to the City Food Administration Department and City Commercial Control Office. Furthermore, a semi-monthly statistical report is submitted to the foregoing two organizations.
9. Representatives of the National Inspection Ministry, North Korean Labor Party, Food Administration Bureau, Food Administration Department, Police, and Commercial Office inspect ration stations three or four times a week, without giving notice, to check on dishonesty. They check the food rationed by officials at the station and then check their records against warehouse records. If there is a small difference in the records, the officials may be requested to give only a written explanation, but if the difference is large, they are prosecuted.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

-3-

10. Prices of rations in P'yongyang in late 1951 were: rice 5 won per one kilogram; millet 4.56 won per kilogram, redbeans 4.09 won, rice 3.46 won, green beans 5.11 won. Rations are 60 percent rice, 20 percent corn, and 20 percent other grain. The quantity of grain established by the North Korean government in late 1951 as the daily ration to be issued various vocational groups, and the numerical classification of the groups is shown in the chart below:

| <u>Classification</u> | <u>Vocational or Social Group</u>               | <u>Quantity in grams</u> |
|-----------------------|---|--------------------------|
| First class           | Mine workers                                    | 900                      |
| Second class          | Heavy laborers, medical doctors, and police men | 800                      |
| Third class           | School teachers and college students            | 700                      |
| Fourth class          | Clerical workers                                | 600                      |
| Fifth class           | Middle school students                          | 500                      |
| Sixth class           | Primary school students                         | 400                      |
| Seventh class         | Dependents                                      | 300                      |
| Prisoners             | (These rations are of grains other than rice)   | 300                      |

11. In late 1951 meat was being distributed only the National Defense Ministry for the armed forces, to the police, and to cabinet staff members. Each month 240 tons of meat were being consumed; the National Defense Ministry was taking 200 tons, the police 30 tons, and others 10 tons. Each soldier was receiving 100 grams a day, and tank and air force men 200 grams a day. The ration price of meat was 60 won per kilogram. Cows were purchased by the Food Administration Bureau through consumers' guilds at 40 won a kilogram. Every month 241 tons of beef were purchased: 70 tons in South P'yongan Province, 30 tons in Hwanghae Province, 90 tons in North P'yongan Province, 50 tons in Chagang Province, and one ton in P'yongyang city.
12. Vegetables grown in the neighborhood of P'yongyang were being collected in late 1951, as a tax-in-kind to be supplied to the armed forces and police. In 1951, 8,000 tons of vegetables were collected and ten percent of this crop was consumed by the armed forces and police.

#### Food Administration in P'yongwŏn-kun

13. In January 1952 the Food Administration Section of the P'yongwŏn-kun People's Committee was in Tojang-ni (125-38, 39-26) (YD-2768). The director was KIM Kil-pok (金吉福). The grain levy administered by this office in the area of its jurisdiction in 1951 had taken 70 percent of the grain of the farmer's harvest, or about 70,000 120-pound bags. Rice made up the great bulk of the grain collected, but small amounts of other grains were also collected. A farmer having a poor crop year was compelled to buy enough grain to make up the quota allotted to him. Under favorable conditions, the average farmer had only a two month's supply of grain for his family after paying the rice tax.
14. The Grain Warehouse in P'yongwŏn-kun, consisting of mine warehouses, is controlled by the Food Administration Section of the P'yongwŏn-kun People's Committee. All the warehouses are underground. They are 35 meters long, seven meters wide, and eight meters high, are made of logs, and have ceilings of packed earth. In mid-January 1952 there were 45,000 bags of grain stored in the warehouses. All grains collected in this county are brought to these warehouses, except that which is allotted to the individual village for rationing. The grain stored in the warehouses is taken to mills to be cleaned; then it is transported by trucks and horse-carts to Op'a Station (125-39, 39-20).

CONFIDENTIAL

25X1A

CONFIDENTIAL

-4-

(YD-2857) from where it is shipped to various North Korean Army units in the surrounding area.

#### Kaesong Area

15. In December 1951, at Kaesong, some of the necessities of life were found on the open market, but there were not enough to meet the demands of the inhabitants. Following is a price list of some major items:

|                                  |                 |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Rice, per large mal <sup>2</sup> | 8,000 ROK won   |
| Soy beans, per large mal         | 3,800 ROK won   |
| Red beans, per large mal         | 8,000 ROK won   |
| Oxen, per animal                 | 350,000 ROK won |

The money exchange rate for civilians was one North Korean won to four ROK won, and for soldiers the exchange rate was one North Korean to eight ROK won.

16. On 9 December 1951, two North Korean and eight Chinese Communist soldiers were observed exchanging two quarts of rice for 25 pounds of radishes, two quarts of rice for seven cakes of rice dough, one gallon of rice for one and one third pounds of cookies, and three gallons of rice for one and one third pounds of pork.

17. The following list reflects the effect of the war on the price of grains on the free market in Northwest Korea; prices given are for one small mal<sup>2</sup> of the grain listed in North Korean won.

| <u>Item</u> | <u>Pre-war</u> | <u>1952</u> |
|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| Rice        | 800 won        | 3,500 won   |
| Millet      | 600 won        | 3,100 won   |
| Wheat       | 500 won        | 1,700 won   |
| Corn        | 400 won        | 1,200 won   |
| Barley      | 350 won        | 900 won     |

#### Collection of Taxes-in-kind

18. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has been directing the collection of taxes-in-kind and determining the production targets in conjunction with the Food Administration Bureau.<sup>3</sup> Two types of taxes-in-kind are collected: the first crop or early crop tax-in-kind and the second crop or late crop tax-in-kind. The following figures represent total amount of grains collected as taxes-in-kind throughout North Korea between 1948 and 1951:

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Tonnage</u> | <u>Percentage levied on rice harvest</u> | <u>Percentage levied on the harvest of other grains</u> |
|-------------|----------------|--|---|
| 1948        | 337,260        | Between 10 and 40                        | Between 25 and 30                                       |
| 1949        | 354,150        | Between 10 and 40                        | Between 25 and 45                                       |
| 1950        | 155,600        | Between 10 and 60                        | Between 25 and 60                                       |
| 1951        | 674,520        | Between 50 and 60                        | Between 50 and 70                                       |

The sharp drop in 1950 was caused by extensive United Nation advances, and the large increase in 1951 was caused by the increased requirements for the armed forces.

#### Effect of War and Future Prospects

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

-5-

19. The North Korean Food Administration Bureau prepared for the war with South Korea. Prior to June 1950 all the warehouses in P'yongyang were filled with about 27,000 tons of polished and unpolished rice and grain. However, in August 1950 the government was short of polished rice. To meet this situation, all local mills were ordered to polish rice, and trucks and ox carts were mobilized to transport food. In early September 1950, 130,000 sacks of unpolished grain were moved to the outskirts of P'yongyang for protection against United Nation air raids. The lack of proper storage facilities caused from 300 to 500 sacks of grain to spoil a year. Spoiled grain was generally distributed to breweries. United Nations air strikes have destroyed many warehouses and other storage facilities, so that now most grain is stored in the open and the spoilage of grain has trebled.
20. Because of the increase in consumption of grain by the North Korean armed forces since the beginning of the war, shortages have developed. Before the war, 850 tons of grain were used by the National Defense Ministry, the police, and cabinet staff members, but this figure swelled to 1,500 tons per month after hostilities began, and by October 1951 the total had increased to 2,000 tons. In 1952 the North Korean Army will consume 1,000 tons per month more than they did in 1951, and the Chinese Communists, who consumed from 1,000 tons to 2,000 tons per month in the past, will need 1,400 tons per month in 1952.
21. One reason the food situation became critical in North Korea was that some local tax-in-kind warehouses were requisitioned by the Chinese Communist forces in 1950 and 1951. The Chinese Communists had planned to bring their own food when they entered Korea, but they were unable to implement this intention because of poor transportation facilities. The Chinese planned to bring grain into Korea from Manchuria to replace food taken by them; however by December 1951 no grain had been imported for this purpose. The Chinese Communists seized 3,000 tons of grain in local warehouses between October and late December 1950, and between January and November 1951 they requisitioned 50,000 tons of grain. The grain was taken illegally without payment or official arrangements.
22. It is estimated that approximately 1,500 to 2,000 sacks of grain will completely decay and 50,000 sacks will half decay in 1952 because of poor storage facilities. To meet this shortage, the Communists plan to import about 100,000 tons of grain from Manchuria, and the Ministry of Industry has already issued directions to prepare exchange goods for the imports. About 1,700,000 straw bags will be collected from North Koreans to package the grain so imported. The Chinese Communists claim their forces will not be allotted any of this grain.
23. Incessant movement of food handling organizations, damage caused by changes in the front line, and United Nation air strikes have made it impossible to continue centralized food administration in North Korea. For these reasons food administration will be localized in 1952. Each provincial governor will assume all responsibilities for food administration and will have to fulfill production targets designated by the central government.
24. Collective farms will be formed in 1952 in North Korea to raise labor efficiency. The types of grains to be sown will be designated to remedy more effectively shortages in certain types of food. In 1951 several villages pooled their resources and tried the collective system. The farmers lived and worked together and prepared their food in collective kitchens. The experiments failed to produce desirable results in the five areas of experiment because of poor instructors and a shortage of physically fit labor; 90 percent of the farmers were old men, women, and children. At a meeting of the Provincial

CONFIDENTIAL

25X1A

CONFIDENTIAL

-6-

Food Administration Department heads, held to plan the collection of straw bag containers, it was stated that the collective farm system will be gradually put into force throughout the country beginning in 1952. The system will be placed into effect when the National Planning Committee agrees with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on exact measures to be taken. There is also a possibility that the collection of taxes-in-kind will be slightly lightened in 1952.

Marine Products Production and Administration

25. Prior to 1 December 1951 the Fisheries Control Bureau was under the Fisheries Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, but on 1 September the Standing Committee of the North Korean Cabinet decided to make the Fisheries Bureau independent and subject only to the cabinet. All business formerly handled by the Fisheries Department was transferred to the Bureau. The Bureau was located in Chungsong-ni (中城里), P'yongyang, in late 1951.

26. The bureau controls the following organizations; the number of branches of each of these sections or independent agencies in various parts of North Korea is also shown:

|                               |    |                                |     |
|-------------------------------|----|--------------------------------|-----|
| Fishery office                | 17 | Net works                      | 1   |
| Fishery experimental stations | 3  | Agar-agar works                | 1   |
| Fishery schools               | 4  | Fishing implement works        | 1   |
| Shipbuilding yards            | 10 | Semi-private fishery companies |     |
| Barrel manufacturing works    | 2  |                                | 231 |

27. North Korean fishing villages and factory facilities have been severely damaged by United Nations air and naval bombardment; nevertheless, the government has had to depend on the fishery industry for much of its food supply and is making great efforts to rehabilitate that industry. In early 1952 priority was being given loans for the reconstruction of damaged fishing facilities by the National Bank. Employees of fishing enterprises are exempted from labor mobilization. Because of the United Nations blockade of the East Coast, the lakes of South Hamgyong Province have been exploited for fish production more thoroughly than usual. The production quota for 1950 was 800,000 tons of sea food and the North Korean fishermen caught 920,000 tons. However, the war caused the government to lower the quota for 1951 to 36,400 tons of fish.

25X1A 1. [REDACTED] Comment. This number of ration cards seems excessive for the population of P'yongyang was 500,000 in 1950, and since the war many Koreans have evacuated the city because of bombing, while other P'yongyang residents fled south with United Nations forces according to [REDACTED] 25X1A

25X1A 2. [REDACTED] Comment. A large mal of rice is about one-half bushel, or 30 pounds, and a small mal is half that amount.

25X1A 3. [REDACTED] Comment. For a more detailed account of taxes-in-kind and other details on the food situation in North Korea see [REDACTED] 25X1A

CONFIDENTIAL